

NEWS RELEASE

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New Mexican Mafia's Back is Broken

Maricopa County Attorney Rick Romley and representatives of a multi-jurisdictional investigative team announced today the conclusion of a long term investigation which has "broken the back" of an extremely violent and dangerous prison gang known as the "New Mexican Mafia." The investigation resulted in the indictment of 34 individuals including high-ranking members of the New Mexican Mafia and their associate organizations on 81 criminal felony charges.

This multi-jurisdictional investigation included representatives of the Maricopa County Attorney's Office, Phoenix Police Department, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, Arizona Department of Public Safety and the Arizona Department of Corrections. Support was also provided by the Mesa Police Department, the Chandler Police Department, and the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office. The conclusion of this investigation will significantly impact the ability of the "New Mexican Mafia" to conduct their illegal business.

The "New Mexican Mafia" is a violent prison-based criminal syndicate that was first recognized by the Arizona Department of Corrections in the late 1970's. This prison gang split from the original "Mexican Mafia" criminal organization and was formed to control criminal activity including drug distribution within the Arizona prison system. Members of "New Mexican Mafia" have a reputation for violence and are alleged to have been involved in violent crimes and in the trafficking of illegal drugs both inside the prison system and out on the streets of Phoenix and surrounding communities. On Dec. 28, 1998, three New Mexican Mafia Gang members were indicted for conspiring to murder Terry L. Stewart, Director of the Arizona Department of Corrections. Subsequent to this investigation further intelligence surfaced implicating the New Mexican Mafia in an array of criminal activity. In addition, it has been reported that the individual indicted in the death of Chandler Police Officer Jim Snedigar is also a member of the "New Mexican Mafia." The "New Mexican Mafia" is well organized and patterned after a military structure, whose philosophy requires members to remain loyal forever, whether inside or outside of prison.

"Unlike other investigations of violent gangs which result in the seizure of drugs destined for distribution outside of Arizona, this investigation centered on activities right in our own backyard. The members of the "New Mexican Mafia" are considered by law enforcement to be dangerous, violent and elusive individuals. These arrests severely cripple the "New Mexican Mafia's" ability to conduct their extensive drug trade in the Phoenix Metropolitan area. Members and associates of this dangerous criminal gang, if convicted, face long term incarceration," said County Attorney Rick Romley.

(For specific information regarding defendants and felony charges see attached indictment.)

NEW MEXICAN MAFIA

The “New Mexican Mafia” is a prison based criminal syndicate, which first was recognized within the Arizona Department of Corrections in the late 1970’s. This group of inmates split from the original Mexican Mafia due to conflicts over the control and distribution of illegal drugs and other criminal activity within the prison system. In most cases, members of the “New Mexican Mafia” were at one time also members of criminal street gangs prior to incarceration. To become a member of the “New Mexican Mafia” frequently an act of violence against a rival is demanded by members in good standing. Members of the “New Mexican Mafia” were and are involved in the trafficking of illegal drugs both inside the prison system and out on the streets. To control this illegal activity and maintain power structure, members of the “New Mexican Mafia” have committed acts of violence including aggravated assault and murder. The New Mexican Mafia is very well organized and based on a military structure with specific rules and regulations referred to as the “reglas”. The philosophy of the “New Mexican Mafia” is blood in/blood out and members are expected to remain loyal forever to the brotherhood

INVESTIGATION:

This multi-jurisdictional long-term investigation was conducted by the Investigators from the Phoenix Police Department, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Arizona Department of Public Safety, the Arizona Department of Corrections and the Maricopa County Attorney’s Office. Other valley law enforcement agencies assisting in the investigation included the Mesa Police Department, Chandler Police Department and the Maricopa County Sheriff’s Office.

ORGANIZATIONS:

The central point of the investigation was "Raymond Llamas" alleged to be the main procurer and distributor of narcotics for the New Mexican Mafia.

Llamas is alleged to have obtained large quantities of cocaine and methamphetamine and distributed these quantities in smaller user quantities to his clientele. Llamas allegedly used a network of subordinates in Guadalupe to distribute these illegal drugs to individuals valley wide, including Phoenix, Mesa, Chandler, Tempe and even Tucson.

Llamas allegedly had numerous sources for heroin, cocaine and marijuana including to other organizations in Mesa and Chandler. These organizations are allegedly controlled and operated by Luis and Felipe Cisneros. As a result of the investigation we learned that Llamas is associated with the Cisnero brothers. The investigation resulted in the discovery of an operational methamphetamine lab here in Phoenix, which was capable of producing multi pound quantities of methamphetamine daily.

SEIZURES:

Prior to today's arrests over two pounds of methamphetamine, 14 ounces of heroin, three hundred pounds of marijuana and a kilogram of cocaine have been seized. In addition \$25,000 in cash and numerous weapons have been seized.

The investigation revealed that was Llamas allegedly distributing an average of an ounce of heroin a day for the past three months. The marijuana seized has a street value of \$216,000 if sold in quarter pound amounts and the figure grows even larger if sold in smaller amounts. Numerous weapons have already been seized from both of these organizations.

IMPACT:

These arrests and others to follow will put a significant drain on the money flow to pay for Mexican Mafia Members and their associates in and out of custody.

INDICTMENTS:

The investigation centered on the New Mexican drug distribution network here in the Metropolitan Phoenix. As a result of this investigation 34 persons including high-ranking members of the New Mexican Mafia and their associate organizations have been indicted on 81 felony criminal counts.